

That-Which-Shall-Be of Old Khalil  
or  
Visions of a Hashish Eater  
☾★

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## Prologue

As a young man I sought a knowledge, perhaps a wisdom, I could not attain in my native land. Religion was not for me, despite the inescapable nominative chains binding me to *Islam*. I do not think the Prophet- Allah bless and keep him- an unwise man. Quite the contrary, I believe him a man of outstanding character, a liver of the good life. It is his proselytizing, the pariahhood of those who reject the words of the messenger of the angel of God, that I think unwise.

But I lose myself. I could write volumes on the shortcomings of religion, but that is not my intent. As I said, in my younger years I was a seeker of that which my homeland could not give me. I was raised in a speck of a village called *Asghar*, which in the old tongue simply means *small*. *Asghar* was aptly named not only for its size, but for the mindedness of its inhabitants as well.

Like the rest of our community, my father kept sheep and goats, had a few chickens, and nursed a small plot of spinach and date trees. He was a superstitious man, robust and full of life, well respected in our small community, but a man of little ambition and insular thinking. He had nothing to quell my longing, only the offer of a life as static and agrarian as his.

My mother I never knew- rest her poor soul- for in giving me the gift of life, she died. This has burdened my spirit since I

## Afterward

The ancient seer descended into incomprehensible glossolalia and coarse grunting. For five minutes he spasmed, shaking as if he were freezing to death in the desert heat, and his eyes then rolled back into his head. He slept soundly for some hours, while I sat and mulled over what he had gleaned from his enchantment. I found myself so disturbed, so unable to shake his ghastly forecast from my mind, I forced myself to leave. He still slept when I arose, and I left without waking him to say farewell.

I have never seen *Khalil* again, and the eeriness of the whole encounter has made me think him a *djinn* or some spirit of chaos. Whatever the source of his strangeness- for that matter, whether or not the man even existed- I am glad to have recorded his spell. This work has been generally well received by my peers, and I have earned a small reputation here in Shiraz. Everything else aside, I can only offer hope and faith that the world he saw will never come to be. And if it does? Well, *Al-Ghafur* grant mercy and forgiveness to these wicked souls.

- Farjad Mohammed Nijad Shabak,  
7 Rabi' al-awwal, 953 A.H.



XX.

The legacy they deposit shall outlive memories of those who remembered them,

Generations suffering for their childishness,  
the mutant offspring of a handful of bad ideas,  
a short lashing out against Mother,  
and a return to her as the soldier returns home,  
welcome, but unmoving.

XXI.

The old giants shall have been slain,  
the frost *djinn* long since puddles,  
the oceans and rivers swollen then dessicated,  
and they shall wonder, and crave,  
only thoughts of the past,  
reminiscing over lost treasure that sparkled less than scat,  
and scat is what shall feed them,  
there among the lifeless lakebeds and sorrowful half-mountains,  
Those-Who-Shall-Become Those-Who-Were,  
and Those-Who-Never-Should-Have-Been,  
and Those-Who-Shall-Never-Again-Be,  
while not a single tear is shed.

can remember, and I knew to remain in Asghar would only serve to make the torment worse.

So, like many young men of my time, I left my home to learn the ways of the world.

The year was 952- or 1545 A.D. by the calendar I later learned Christians use- and Tahmasp I sat on the throne as Shah of the newly empowered Safavid dynasty. Persia was relatively peaceful, and the arts were being born anew. Thinking of no better course, I made my way to the nearest city to determine my future.

Upon arriving in Shiraz, I was overwhelmed at its magnificence. I had never been to a city before this, and to be truthful, it frightened me. The quiet of the desert is a delicate gem to be well hidden from the shattering and clattering of city streets.

I was lost in thoughts, blinded by new sights, deafened by the hundreds of sweet musics. When realization struck me, I cursed myself, and cursed again, for what a fool I was. I had no knowledge of the city Shiraz, I had no acquaintances in the city, I knew nothing of employment for others, I had no money and little food, and I had no lodgings.

My journey to wisdom had begun in total ignorance.

After two weeks had expired, I was beginning to find my footing. I had a little money, a small but comfortable room to stay in, and I ate at least twice a day. I had spoken to many about my interest in scholarship. The same advice was always given, sometimes jovial and sometimes mocking, often with a sly chuckle: "Learn to read and write, you bumpkin!"

I spent the next year pursuing that goal, doing odd jobs to fund my stay and to fill my belly. When I had become functionally literate, I began reading everything I could lay hands on, no matter the subject or length. I also sought the company of learned men- philosophers and scientists, poets- who would teach me anything I did not yet know. I engaged in taxing discussions from which I emerged less of a fool. I partook of many activities tied to city life, teaching myself haggling, new languages, food and the tender appreciation of wine, the wisdom of the street, and the alluring world of women.

I educated myself in these ways for some two years. I then realized I wanted to author a work of my own, for neither flattery nor wealth, but to earn the respect and attention of the intellectual world. I felt no more passion for one topic than for any other, so I had difficulty choosing just what to write about.

Stumbling about the city one afternoon, frustrated and mentally flat, I found the answer to my dilemma. He pressed through the throng to reach me, stood before me staring at my face. When staring no longer amused him, he pressed a withered twig-finger

## XVIII.

Afterwards, She will exhale the sigh of soul tortured,  
that sigh of relief and of insanity,  
the sigh of exhaustion, disappointment, emotionless desperation,  
the exiting breath of a body's departure,  
and no one shall live to listen,  
no one shall care to comfort.

## XIX.

Their shackles broken,  
so too their wills,  
so many die,  
and die again,  
an easy meal for the thousands of Brothers and Sisters forsaken,  
family estranged and thrashed, slaughtered into quiet withdrawal,  
but their return is marked by the blood and bones of their captors,  
they revel in the rot,  
scrub the world clean of **Those-Who-Shall-Be**,  
who are destined to be **Those-Who-Were**,  
shit the ground fertile once more,  
sing the ancient songs of hardships past,  
elate themselves,  
revere God and Sun and Moon and Stars,  
praise Soil and Sand and **Wave** and **Breeze**,  
riding their current of deathmirth higher and higher,  
and justly so.

XVI.

We speak of merchants,  
we haggle and barter, make and trade,  
but Mercantile is the god of their everyday,  
nothing is safe from sale,  
nothing excused from profits,  
and with the genuine unknowing of a newborn,  
they purchase their own demise,  
and clap and hoot for their cleverness,  
all the while, *Iblis*,  
a twisted-toothed, green-smiled snickerer.

XVII.

Alas! for the walls of Jericho,  
smote down by the thousand *shofar* at Yashu's command,  
what a miracle for history to repeat,  
but their cities are surrounded by intangible walls,  
invisible barriers dressed up as thoroughfares,  
and the Whispering Deceivers in every ear,  
the Pucker-cheeked Misleaders before every eye,  
tickling, taunting into apathy and calm,  
keeping them so blind and deaf,  
they would not hear the triumphal blare of a million *shofar*,  
and they would deny the blare if even they could hear.

into my chest, and croaked, "I know what it is you want,  
yeeees! I can see it *raging* in the darkness between your eyes."  
He paused, eying me up and down, and freakishly nodding. "I  
will gift you your subject, but you must follow me, record, and  
ask no questions when I am in communion." With the word  
*communion* a twitch of crazed inspiration shot through his left  
eye, ending in a curled half-grin on that side of his mouth.

I began to ask him when and where we would do this thing, but  
he gently interrupted me, saying, "Let us meet here tomorrow,  
just before sunrise, and assure you have sufficient water for a  
trek into the *Zagros*."

I was intrigued. I knew there was no sense in refusing the old  
man. As he turned and trotted off, it occurred to me I hadn't  
even learned the man's name. I called after him, asking what he  
was called. He didn't bother to turn around, but instead hunched  
a little, cocked his head to one side. Then, glancing at me  
sidelong, he wheezed out, "We are friends, yes? So call me  
friend."

I watched the old man go, and stood there stupefied. Eager for  
the following day to come, I retired to my chambers to a night  
of hazy restlessness.

\* \* \*

The next day I did as he said. I met *Khalil* early. We traveled long, rested little, and eventually reached what we sought. We found a cave to which the old man was partial and we slept for the evening. The next morning he took out a pouch of hashish and began to nibble at it. He offered me none, but jested, "Do you smell the approach of the Angel of God? Let us see if we can't lift the veil a little, eh scholar?"

He chanted and rocked himself for what seemed like hours, finally entering a trance and gazing off at the nothing. Silence passed between us like an uncomfortable traveler tossing about in an unfamiliar bed. When he finally broke the silence, I began to record. The following pages are his words; their meanings belong to each of us. Where the old man paused for more than a moment, I have taken the liberty of separating the text into sections. I have also attempted to arrange his words in more poetic form- his was a rambling chaos of utterances, coherent and sincere, but too coarse for educated men.

### XIII.

Ours is sand, seldom watered,  
theirs is fertile greenness, often wet,  
though they are parched through and through,  
journeying endlessly in the quicksand of stupidity,  
drowning in the Mad Sea.

### XIV.

The Spectacle they cannot bear to witness,  
they paraphrase their own lives in empty glowing forums,  
the players are as demons,  
in many places and in one,  
with seven heads and a thousand voices,  
each repeating the tragedy and misfortunate humor of their  
terrible waking,  
day in, day out, again and again and again.

### XV.

Justice blinds Her own eyes,  
not because She cannot arbitrate,  
but because She cannot bear to see what they do in Her name.  
With a tremulous hand She snatches out Her vision,  
hoping one day they will see their error,  
knowing they never will.

X.

They teach their children murder,  
and tell them God is peace,  
they teach their children hate,  
and tell them God is love,  
they teach their children obedience,  
and tell them God is freedom,  
they teach their children to desire worldly things,  
and tell them rewards await in the Kingdom of God.

XI.

They are attracted to putrescence, drawn toward vulnerability,  
little flies on the corpse of a once majestic beast,  
stagnation waves its illusory hands at them,  
the all-too-eager,  
and they love it, praise and devote to it,  
for it, to them, is progress.

XII.

Falling from the sky,  
dashed and strewn about the ground,  
animated vitals plopped in crimson heaps,  
their laughs are hollow bones,  
and cavities fester where souls ought to be.

## That-Which-Shall-Be

Remain silent, listen; *Al-'Alim*, *Al-Hakim* shall reveal  
That-Which-Shall-Be.

I.

A cemetery blankets all where life once was,  
Glass and metal, darkest haze,  
facelessness looks down on millions rushing,  
rushing to where?, rushing to nothing, to an early grave,  
a death worse than dying, they die while they breathe,  
men wear the skins of men they have conquered,  
their faces imprisoned in masks that always smile.

II.

They name the past Barbarian,  
While the seers of their world broadcast a terrific barbarism,  
When they wake and before they sleep,  
they bathe in the blood of ignorance.

III.

They fly on wings faster than the Messenger of God,  
Veins burrowing through the dirt, suspended in the sky, crushed  
in watery lownesses,  
Whiteness burns their eyes for they stare too long,  
Knowledge, universal,  
Lies untouched for the ease of filth,  
Swamp murk encroaching toward the light,  
Poison tastes sweeter when taken fast.

IV.

Speed is the ally of *Shaytan*,  
and they live constantly speeding,  
the Sneaking Whisperer guides them,  
a blemish rooted and unmovable,  
so that they act as agents of *Iblis*,  
thinking they do the work of God.

V.

In the name of God and Righteousness and Love, their  
butchery knows no end,  
colossal arms vomit brimstone,  
belching such that mountains buckle before them,  
the world is at their mercy,  
and Mercy is a wanderer,  
exiled for seven upon seven score years,  
lost in the dust and dross of progress.

VI.

Their minds are as clear as mud,  
their thoughts as pure,  
their hearts pump a hatred in circuits around them,  
their hearts beat to the rhythm of that hatred,  
their hearts beat on only because it is their routine to beat,  
for they are they walking dead.

VII.

He who walks alone is cut down,  
he who braves a novel thought is cut down,  
women are cut down,  
he whose god wears a different name,  
he who desires peace and understanding,  
he who seeks wisdom instead of wealth is cut down,  
and he who wants not the boot of another man upon his throat,  
he too is cut down.

VIII.

Flaming wings, outstretched, ferry them to the heavens,  
from such great distance their world seems a taintless idyll,  
untruth is their mother's milk,  
from which they suckle lies to sustain their uncontinuable path,  
they look to future discoveries to solve the problems birthed by  
a foolish past,  
just as they appeal to violence and bigotry to solve problems  
created thusly.

IX.

They exchange allegiances as often as coin,  
and often one for the other,  
their loyalty is given only to the strongest of men,  
and only to men,  
the richest and most powerful,  
it is given to God only when their horrendousness  
begs justifying,  
never is it given to the deserving.